

Dear Chairs Steinberg and Daugherty Abrams, Vice Chairs Anwar, Kushner, and Gilchrest, Ranking Members Hwang, Somers, and Petit, and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Hannah Cevasco, and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 368-An Act Concerning Concerning Suicide Prevention**. This bill would make key changes in the current language in Connecticut statutes to support suicide awareness and prevention, specifically in the youth population. The current Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board does not include insight from suicide prevention foundations, youth-focused groups, cultural or religious agencies **AND** anyone with experiences with suicidal thoughts or loss of a loved one. This amendment is crucial in ensuring that people suffering from mental health conditions are supported and spoken for by representatives who have experience and understanding of the intense suffering that comes with self-harm and mental health issues.

This bill will also require physicians to be trained in suicide prevention as a part of their required basic medical education. Physicians are an important source of support for their patients, especially children, and should be properly educated on how to properly support someone suffering from a mental health condition. With suicidal ideation being closely linked to mental health diagnosis, it is critical this population can also be treated with the correct advice, resources and language in a time of true emergency need.

With the rise of mental health conditions and behavior due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever that Connecticut support its residents in preventing suicide across all ages. By creating a space for allies and experts, Connecticut can work to lower rates of suicide and suicidal thoughts through prevention, intervention, and responses to well-being crises. From those we have lost to suicide, 90% are predicted to have struggled with a mental disorder. If Connecticut has labeled mental health an immediate issue, then we must also support the greater consequence. I urge you to vote in favor of SB 368 to make these small, but instrumental changes to our current policy regarding the makeup of the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board while also ensuring our doctors have the right vocabulary to support their patients when discussing suicide.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Hannah Cevasco